



EUROPEAN UNION

**Permanent Council Nr 882
Vienna, 13 October 2011**

EU statement on the 17th round of Geneva discussions

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva discussions, the latest round of which took place on 4 October. Despite the persistence of difficulties and differences amongst participants, we consider the continuation of the Geneva discussions to be of utmost importance. They provide the only forum in which all sides are represented and three international actors – the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations – work in close co-operation for the security and stability of the region. We support the OSCE's active participation in the meetings, in which good use can be made of its extensive cross-dimensional experience. We welcome Ambassador Philippe Lefort's first participation to the discussions as the new EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia and his predecessor's, Ambassador Pierre Morel, continued support.

With regard to the first working group, we share the view that the security situation on the ground has been calm and stable since the last round of the Geneva discussions. In this context, we welcome the good functioning of the two IPRMs. At the same time, we underline the need for renewed efforts between participants in order to make progress towards better stability and security on the ground, in particular through additional confidence- and security- building measures in the conflict-affected areas. The issue of non-use of force and

international security arrangements continues to be the main stumbling block in Geneva discussions. In this regard, it is especially important that the commitment to non-use of force should be made by all sides. We call upon all stakeholders to engage without delay in the development of CSBMs with the aim to increase military transparency.

Regarding the second working group on humanitarian issues, we support Ambassador Čekuolis' call on all parties to urgently improve living conditions for people affected by the August 2008 conflict. The EU is pleased that the implementation of water supply projects along the South Ossetian administrative boundary line is well advanced, which are benefiting both communities, and to which the OSCE contributes. However, we are increasingly concerned about the lack of progress regarding the restoration of gas supplies. We reiterate our call on all stakeholders to engage constructively in order to restore basic utilities and services to the affected communities and to ensure freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line.

The EU is looking forward to the next round of Geneva discussions scheduled for 14 December 2011.

We reiterate our firm support for the security and stability of Georgia, based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, recognised by international law. We call once again for full implementation of the EU-brokered Six Point Agreement of 12 August 2008 and its Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008, including the withdrawal of all military forces to the positions held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. We also reiterate our call for unhindered access for the European Union Monitoring Mission to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as unhindered access for humanitarian organisations.

The EU remains convinced of the urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia, in particular for the benefit of

the civilian population, including a robust monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the administrative boundary lines. We reiterate our full support for the efforts by the Lithuanian Chairmanship-in-Office to make progress towards this end.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA and BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

**Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.